

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's North Weald Church of England (VA) Primary School

School Green Lane
North Weald
Epping
Essex
CM16 6EH

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Chelmsford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Essex
Date/s of inspection	2 December 2016
Date of last inspection	2 July 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 115281
Headteacher	Julie Lorkins
Inspector's name and number	Virginia Corbyn 86

School context

St Andrew's is in the process of expanding by 15 additional pupils entering Reception each September from 2016. The percentage for whom the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage is around average whilst those with special educational needs or disabilities is above average. Most are from White British backgrounds. The headteacher has been in post since September 2013 and a new deputy from January 2016. There was a big change of teaching staff and a new chair of governors in September 2016. There are two foundation governor place vacancies. Very few pupils are from families who attend church regularly outside of their involvement through school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's as a Church of England school are good

- All stakeholders can explain the positive impact of the explicit and biblically based values which have been established since the previous denominational inspection.
- Pupils are confident in explaining how these values form the framework of the everyday worshipping life of their Christian community.
- School leaders effectively lead a staff team which is committed to their Christian values of inclusion and excellence, and this has led to improving the rates of progress for most pupils in the school.
- The school has a strong, mutually beneficial and supportive partnership with the local church.

Areas to improve

- Develop pupils' personal spirituality by offering more opportunities for personal prayer within school life.
- Formalise assessment in religious education (RE) in ways which capture the deeper thinking of pupils.
- Develop the RE curriculum in ways which enable pupils to express why RE is important and relevant in their lives.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

Over the past three years, school leaders have established a set of Christian values in consultation with all stakeholders. Their TERRIFIC values (Trust and Honesty, Excellence, Respect, Responsibility, Independence, Friendship and Forgiveness, Inclusiveness and Consideration) are clearly based on biblical principles. The impact of these values, especially excellence and inclusiveness, can be seen in the good progress made by most pupils. The application of particular values in learning included pupils saying, 'I am responsible for others in my class when they are being silly' and 'I need to show consideration for my teachers and listen'. For parents, the school helps to develop, 'good, kind children who have Christian values'. They value the fact that their children are given religious foundations and led to think about God even if they are not from regular, church-going families. Relationships at all levels embody the school's values, enabling staff to nurture pupils in order to meet their individual needs. Staff members feel supported in 'equipping every child, no matter what their beliefs' in becoming a good citizen with strong values upon which to draw in life. Attendance is rewarded and underpinned by the Christian values of responsibility and respect for each other and for the community, and is therefore improving.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is generally well supported. There are some opportunities for pupils to reflect and to pray in school. They spoke about a prayer tree and about some occasions when they had offered their own prayers in worship. However, there are no regular times for prayer during the school day, such as at lunchtime or at the end of the day. There are no areas within individual classrooms or outside which offer space or stimulus for prayer requests. This limits pupils' understanding of the importance and the purpose of prayer, and thus restricts their spiritual development. Moral and social development, particularly related to the Christian value of responsibility, is demonstrated by pupils supporting each other as play leaders and as mentors for younger pupils. Understanding of difference and diversity is explored through the RE curriculum with pupils explaining that 'we learn about other religions to understand how religions are different and the same'. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school with pupils and their parents expressing the view that being at a church school gives them the basis on which to make their own decisions about faith and belief.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship provides a key time for exploring the Christian values of the school in relation to biblical stories and teachings. Clear and simple messages which help pupils to reflect on values and apply them in their lives are conveyed. One pupil explained that this means, 'praying for our learning' with another pupil saying that 'we are learning in worship as well'. The focus of worship is upon the person of Jesus and what his example can teach pupils about their everyday living. Pupils' understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is developing gradually through worship and also through their questions in RE. Pupils use some Anglican forms of worship and prayers, as well as their own school prayer, which support their understanding of the school's partnership with the worship at the local church. Pupil-led worship takes place on each Wednesday. Volunteers from across the school plan an act of worship supported by a team of pupil worship leaders. These acts of worship are currently based upon pupils' favourite stories rather than upon biblical examples. As a result, opportunities for Christian teaching and spiritual reflection are not explored as fully on Wednesdays as in other acts of worship during the week.

Over the past three years, worship has been opened out to parents in a number of ways which means that they are increasingly seeing school as their church. Good numbers of parents attend worship on Fridays to share in the successes of their children through worship. The termly school Eucharist has been made more accessible to pupils and to their families alongside a monthly family Eucharist at the church. One parent said that this means that her son can now 'grow in his journey of faith alongside his peers'. The gift of a Bible to every Reception child, to be used in school, was also seen by parents as an active demonstration of an important link between church and home to enhance their children's understanding of Christianity. Pupils are regularly consulted about worship and their views are acted upon, for example in making changes to the songs used.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

The school has addressed one of the recommendations from the previous denominational report that it must raise standards in religious education and ensure that there is full coverage of the RE curriculum. This means that RE has had a much higher profile within the school over the past three years. It also means that standards of attainment are at least in line with national expectations. The locally agreed syllabus, supplemented by diocesan support material, has been used effectively and, as a result, pupils exhibit secure subject knowledge of Christianity and other world religions. However, many pupils are not able to explain clearly or confidently why it is important to learn RE in school. This means that not all pupils fully engage with its relevance for their own lives.

The school is accurate in its evaluation of the teaching and learning in RE supported by more rigorous monitoring and evaluation, including that of governors. The RE subject leader, who took up responsibility in September 2016, has attended training for 'Understanding Christianity'. This is an approach to teaching Christianity which focuses on key ideas and concepts. She has shared this appropriately with her colleagues. As a result, teachers have started to enquire into key Christian concepts, such as incarnation linked to their teaching about Christmas. By embracing conceptual thinking, teachers are beginning to encourage deeper thinking based upon the pupils' own questions about their RE. Whilst in its early stages and with limited and short-term impact, it is resulting in pupils being more enthusiastic about RE and enjoying it more. This is because they have more opportunities to have 'conversations and arguments' about their own ideas. The majority of teaching is good. There is some evidence of developmental marking in RE to encourage reflective thinking. However, assessment is not yet sufficiently robust to demonstrate that progress is consistent, rapid and sustained.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The commitment of school leaders, in particular that of the headteacher and her deputy, ensures that the Christian vision and values of the school are readily articulated by all stakeholders. They understand that these values underpin the good progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who exhibit challenging behaviour and those who join the school at different times. School leaders and staff live out the belief that their values demand that they are as inclusive as they can possibly be. For all of them, meeting the individual needs of their pupils and their families is 'serving others through our values'. Governors rightly recognise the rapid progress of the school as a church school over the past three years. Appointing foundation governors has proved a challenge and there are currently two vacancies. This means that the governing body is not working at full strength. Nonetheless, governors are committed and appropriately supportive and challenging of the school. Self-evaluation of the school as a church school is accurate, realistic and aspirational whilst recognising that the vision and values are not yet fully embedded. The issues from the previous denominational report have largely been addressed. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met. Consultation with stakeholders informs plans to drive improvement, especially the views and ideas of pupils.

The RE leader is well supported by senior leaders and governors in improving the RE curriculum, the priority of which is to develop 'Understanding Christianity' approaches across the school. This means that there are now higher and more consistent expectations for RE. School leaders ensure that all new members of staff understand that they will be expected to contribute to the Christian life of the school as part of their interview and induction. A wide range of strong and effective partnerships enriches the educational experiences of all members of the school community. As well as contributing well to the worshipping life of the school, the local incumbent provides a presence which is properly seen as representing church and community for the school. This means that the church has been able to reach out successfully to children and to their families. The school takes an active part in community life in ways which pupils and parents say that they value, including, most recently, remembering those who have died in conflicts. Recent diocesan training and advice has provided some support for the school in its ongoing journey of improvement as a church school.

SIAMS report December 2016 St Andrew's North Weald CE primary (VA) school Epping Essex CM16 6EH